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patrons; others have established fairly close contact with them through business relations.

The patronage of the parish priest has traditionally been important. Not only are all villagers his spiritual clients, but he is also a source of charity and assistance in many fields. He serves his parishioners individually in the capacity of legal adviser, character reference and often also as letter-writer and banker. He frequently argues their claims against the government. He also represents the interests of the community at large, and attempts, often successfully, to obtain improved public amenities such as new roads, street lighting and so on. At least, this is the role that he occupied until the introduction of representative government.

III

Influence through the networks of personal relations and patrons is the traditional method of handling contacts with authority. It still operates when representative government is in abeyance. But the advent of elected government introduced a new set of relations, and provided a new focus of power. Political parties and professional politicians provided new and surer channels of influence and sources of patronage, though they have not replaced the old ones. The villager now uses both old and new channels, separately or together.

The organization of all parties, at least before Mintoff reorganized the Labour Party, was rather simple. Party interests were represented in the villages by personal canvassers or party agents, as well as by the candidates themselves. The old Labour Party under Paul Boffa had a number of village party committees. When the party was returned to power, patronage and influence flowed abundantly, and brought the whole structure into vigorous life. The canvassers became important people who could pass along requests and schedule appointments with the local MLA's and even the Ministers. They also helped the local MLA's prepare the lists of people who were to be given jobs, for until 1955 most of the lower-grade industrial labourers with the Public Works Department were employed upon the recommendation of the local MLA's. Politicians who held office before 1955 often told me that making out the employment rosters and dealing with the daily queue of job-seekers were among their most difficult and

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time-consuming tasks. To help as many as possible, they often made up new job rosters every few months.

Canvassers would often expect presents for their work as intermediaries and for the favours they promised or secured. By and large, the party agents or canvassers were not popular figures, at least in retrospect. I came across many accounts of how they had exploited their positions to enrich themselves. The usual story was that they had accepted gifts – a rabbit, some chickens, a bottle of whisky or even cash – but had not assisted as they had promised. These tales may or may not be true; I had no way of checking. It is significant, however, that persons of all political colours, including former Ministers and MLA's, believe them to be true.

Mintoff's government did much to change the course of the stream of political patronage. To begin with, shortly after it came into office in 1955, the MLP passed a law which made it compulsory for those seeking employment with the government as industrial labourers to register with the Department of Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare.[1] There they had to wait their turn. This took away from MLA's a considerable source of patronage. The MLP also established special sub-committees of the Labour Committees in each village to deal with the complaints and requests of the local inhabitants. A member of the sub-committee was generally available to the public for an hour or two every evening. All requests for assistance and complaints were discussed by the entire sub-committee, which would countersign the routine ones and send them along to the appropriate government department. More important matters were brought personally to the attention of the civil servant concerned by a member of the sub-committee. Complicated requests and serious complaints were forwarded to the District Committee, where they were discussed at the regular weekly meetings with the district MLA's, who might then take the matter up directly with the Minister. Civil servants, on the whole, handled complaints and requests for action from the Local Committees with much the same dispatch they would give a request from their Minister. Some Ministers even went so far as to instruct their Department Heads to ignore all complaints brought to them by private persons, especially parish priests. They were told only to act on those presented by the Local Committee.

[1] Act No. XIV, 1955: 'An Act to Make Provisions for the Establishment and Regulation of an Employment Service.'

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653 665 Another very important function the Local Committees performed during the period the MLP was in power was to obtain improvements for the village. Requests for drainage, new roads, street lighting and, above all, new schools, were submitted to the District Committees. There the proposals were screened and given priority ratings by the committee members and the district MLA's. When these projects were implemented, and a large number were, the Local Committees naturally received credit for them. This added to their claim to represent their villages, and strengthened the formal structure of the party.

647 662 665 This system of handling patronage and complaints gave the villager a direct contact with authority. It was a fairly simple procedure, and many considered it reasonably impartial, though of course it did help to be a member of the Labour Party in good standing. Moreover, the complainant, even though he might not succeed in his cause, had the satisfaction that it had received attention, and it did not cost him a nice fat rabbit. This does not 578 mean that there was no abuse. Civil servants complained that they 647 were often intimidated by zealous MLP members who threatened 66 to report them to their Ministers if they did not comply as requested. This friction was particularly keen between the Local Committee members and the village police, street sweepers and teachers. One head teacher I knew was particularly bitter about his caretaker, who was a member of the village MLP committee. The caretaker would stroll into the head teacher's office if he disagreed with the disciplining of a child, for example, and threaten to report him to the Minister if he did not lighten the punishment.

647 665 662 But on the whole, the MLP made a concerted effort to take patronage out of the hands of canvassers and MLA's alike and channel it through the various committees of the party apparatus. This not only strengthened the party, it also won it considerable popularity. Moreover, it relieved MLA's and Ministers of a heavy administrative load; they were only called in on the more complicated matters. In short, the Local Committees came to function as branches of the government.

When the Labour Government resigned in 1958, the MLP clubs and committees lost the influence they had with government. They once more became merely propaganda and social centres. But the role they had played for three years in representing the interests of government at the village level and in

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forwarding the requests and complaints of the villagers to government had greatly increased their strength, and that of the party they represented. As the members operated as a formal committee and not as individuals, they had the esteem and respect of most of the community. They also had considerable power in local affairs. In fact, for three years the leaders of the Labour group in the village ranked alongside the parish priest and the professionals as the most prominent and influential citizens of the village. The canvassers of the rival parties had perhaps had power, but they had never had respect. Theirs was always rather an underhanded operation, that was often disowned by MLA's when they were confronted with it. The MLP, on the other hand, delegated responsibility to Local Committees, and the Ministers legitimized them by openly working through them in all their relations with the villages. Villagers were also openly encouraged to work through them. These committees thus served the ends of the Labour Party most successfully. It is quite likely, therefore, that in the future other parties will find it politically as well as administratively expedient to develop and work through village committees patterned on the model so successfully tested by the Labour Party.

The party system has come into direct conflict with the traditional relations between patron and client at relatively few points. This is largely because most patrons who desired to were able to move successfully into the new field of party politics. A notable exception are priests, who are no longer permitted by their Bishops to stand for national political office. Their power to influence authority has thus been weakened by the new source of patronage and influence open to their parishioners. In particular, parish priests came into open conflict with the village MLP committees during the Labour Party's time in power after 1955. Not surprisingly, their clash at the village level mirrored the dispute between the Archbishop and the MLP at the national level. That is, it was a conflict between the religious authority of the Church and the secular authority of the State, represented in the villages by the Local Committees of the Labour Party. Both the parish priest and the Local Committee claimed to represent the village, and both sought by mobilizing their supporters to advance their claim at the expense of their opponents. This invariably resulted in a struggle for power during which the Labour supporters were

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accused of being anti-clerical and against the Church because they opposed the will of the parish priest.

Shortly after Mintoff took office, the Local Committee in Kortin made plans to open a new avenue into the village. The scheme, first projected by government planners over sixty years before, was designed to ease the flow of traffic through the village and provide a wide, tree-lined promenade leading to the main square in front of the church. Unfortunately, the project required the demolition of four buildings, two of which were small chapels used as warehouses for the festa decorations. Because of this Dun Bert, the parish priest, bitterly opposed the scheme, as had his predecessors. He claimed that most of the village supported him. The Labour Committee, on the other hand, felt that it had the backing of the village, and went ahead with the project. The road was finally opened, and it proved to be a great success. But the two small churches were destroyed, and the relations between the Labour group and the parish priest remained hostile. Six years later, Dun Bert and his supporters were still pointing to the avenue as positive proof that the Labour Party is fundamentally opposed to the Church.

IV

But if the political parties have modified the traditional system of patronage somewhat by providing a new channel of influence for the villager, the professional politician of today is by and large the same traditional patron. That is, the successful politicians are largely drawn from the professional classes; they are still the doctors, the lawyers, the architects and the chemists. Indeed, until recently the lists of candidates often read like directories of the professional classes. This situation prevailed until about the time of the Labour Party split in 1949, when virtually all the professional class Labour MLA's sided with Dr. Boffa and formed the Workers' Party, while most of the MLP Executive and the rank and file supported Mintoff. After this the Labour Party asked people from all classes to stand as candidates, and began to push up working-class leaders trained in union and club politics. But the politicians from the professional class still heavily outnumber their working-class colleagues, even in the Labour Party.

Table 8 below illustrates this. Of the fifty MLA's elected in the

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1962 elections, three-fourths are members of the professional classes. The remainder are persons who, for the most part, have risen to positions of influence through party and trade union hierarchies.

TABLE 8. Occupation of Candidates Elected to the 1962 Malta Legislative Assembly

OCCUPATION	POLITICAL PARTY				
	Nationalist	*Labour*	*Other*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Professional	24	9	5	38	76
Administrative	1	4	2	7	14
Skilled Labour	—	3	2	5	10
Total	25	16	9	50	100

The way a political candidate recruits a following depends upon his status and party. All candidates recruit support through their relatives and friends; and all usually have a following in their own villages outside this circle of relatives. To get this, they must usually be successful politicians at the village level. It is for this reason that so many politicians are also presidents of local band and social clubs, and even of some of the lay apostolate societies. Next, every candidate must establish contact with the people in his electoral district outside the village. Since there are usually at least five candidates from each party standing in every district, each normally concentrates his campaign on one part of the district. He does this by making frequent rounds of all the band and social clubs and important wine shops in his territory. There he listens to complaints and requests and, in general, tries to establish a reputation as a generous and approachable person without committing himself to do specific favours. But above all, it is important for him to meet many people, for the Maltese voter does not like to give his first vote to a person he, or at least some member of his immediate family, does not know personally. Finally, all candidates tour their districts just before the election and make speeches.

Candidates who are doctors, lawyers, notaries, architects and so on, have a decided advantage. As professionals, they already have close personal contact with a large number of clients, many of whom are bound to them by debts, or obligated to them for help and favours. These obligations are important, for the Maltese villager does not like to receive something for nothing, and he

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557 662 666 does not rest easily until he has repaid it. This is as true of corporate groups such as the band clubs as it is of individuals Frequently the financial circumstances of the client, or the very nature of the favour, make it difficult or impossible for him to meet his obligation. His vote, and those of his family, provide the logical and accepted means to this end. This extends the relationship between patron and client to include that between politician and constituent.

66 Candidates who do not have the professional qualifications or high status necessary to recruit a following in this way are at a disadvantage. This is especially true for many of the Labour Party candidates, whose education and social standing at times compare unfavourably with those of their rivals. It was principally to overcome this handicap that the Labour Party sought to strengthen the party at the expense of individual candidates. It did this by limiting the system of political patronage which prevailed under previous governments and curbing the influence of the canvassers. In fact, the MLP officially forbade its candidates to employ canvassers. (Though, of course, many candidates have informal canvassers in their friends, relatives and clients.) At the same time, the party directed its propaganda at building up the image of the party and its leader. Labour supporters were constantly urged to vote for the party and not for individuals. By and large its campaign has been most successful. Its sympathizers not only vote for candidates who do not conform to the traditional image of the professional patron-politician, but they also vote across class lines, i.e. the teacher voting for an ex-dockyard fitter.

578 621 65 666 All candidates have to take into account the parochial rivalries which often cut across their districts. This is particularly true of the rivalry between the festa partiti. It has been noted that there is often a political polarity between festa partiti in the same village, and that sometimes the rivalry is so strong that partisans vote against a political party simply because a leading member of the rival partit is a candidate for it. But the number of people who place loyalty to their festa partit before support of a political party is declining. Nonetheless, if parochial rivalry no longer determines which party will get the votes, it very often decides which of the candidates within the party will. Many people have assured me that it is almost unheard of for a member of a festa partit to vote for a member of the rival partit, even though both support the

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critical to his election. Successful politicians repeatedly stressed to me the importance of carefully cultivating secondary preferences. As one put it, 'The first preferences keep you from being eliminated, but the secondary ones elect you.' The votes a candidate gets on subsequent counts are the result of his ability (i) to bargain with other candidates for the secondary preferences of their followers, and (ii) to set up a network of personal canvassers to secure these secondary preferences from the supporters of candidates who do not wish to release them to him. One technique that all candidates use is to encourage popular village figures to stand as mock candidates for vote-getting purposes. The understanding is that the politician is to receive their secondary preferences if they are defeated, as they usually are, since they are not generally known outside their villages. In exchange for these votes, the professional politician generally offers to pay the mock candidate's election expenses, or if elected to procure some favour for him, or both. This technique has resulted in an extraordinary number of candidates contesting every election. In 1955 a total of 140 candidates from three parties contested 40 seats; in 1962 there were 302 for six parties and 50 seats. Thus voters, many of whom are illiterate, are faced with a bewildering choice of candidates arranged alphabetically on ballots that are sometimes three feet long.

Another way for a candidate to gather secondary votes is to exchange secondary preferences with a rival. Occasionally a candidate tries to play both ends against the middle. That is, he promises his second votes to more than one of his rivals in exchange for theirs. This works very well for him if his rivals are eliminated before he is, but if he goes first, the official record of the distribution of his votes soon shows up his duplicity.

While this system of voting assures representation to all shades of political opinion, it works in several ways against the development of a strong two-party system. To begin with, it is ideally suited to the needs of the traditional patron-politician with his own localized, semi-private political organization of canvassers, mock candidates and clients. The present system of voting in combination with this organization assures him that many votes will be funnelled in to him. In the past these personal organizations ensured the re-election of politicians even if they changed parties. In fact a politician's supporters sometimes encourage him

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662 to switch to the party with best chance of success, for they know
666 that if he is elected, he will channel patronage to them, often at the expense of the rest of his electoral district.

578 This system of voting also encourages contests between candidates from the same party. Such contests, carried out in public
66 and in the heat of a campaign, often create hostility among the leaders of the party, and weaken its solidarity.

Finally, because this proportional system makes it possible for popular minority candidates to be elected, it encourages dissident factions to hive off from the major parties and found new ones.
665 This seriously weakens the parent parties. Thus, although the only political division of real importance is that between the supporters
666 of the Archbishop and those who favour Mintoff, there are now six political parties in Malta. It is not surprising therefore that the minority parties, and Miss Strickland's Progressive Constitutional Party in particular, are strongly in favour of retaining the present electoral system. Without it they would not be represented. The Malta Labour Party, which favours a strong two-party system, would prefer to see substituted an electoral system which would eliminate the smaller parties and strengthen the major parties. The Nationalist Party, although it would benefit from a change in the electoral system which would eliminate many of its rivals, has remained relatively silent on this point. This is because most of its leading members are patron-politicians of the old school. They owe their political life and the influence they command to the electoral system which has enabled them to build their own personal political organizations. The Nationalist Party is a party of respected and influential men, but in their strength lies its weakness. It is a party of politicians, rather than a politician's party. Dr. Borg Olivier, the Nationalist Prime Minister, is a first among equals; he does not lead his party in the sense that Mintoff leads the Malta Labour Party.

In short the Maltese system of proportional representation
[578] facilitates the emergence of minority parties. It also weakens the major parties by promoting intra-party rivalry and helping to keep alive the tradition of local patron-politicians. These factors
642 militate against the development of a strong central government.
66 It can be argued forcefully that Malta, which is facing a critical period in its economic and constitutional development, is now in greater need of a strong central government than ever before. It